SCRIM-
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SCRIMSHAW

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[VERSES]

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BALTIMORE
THE NORMAN, REMINGTON CO.
1925

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Published April, 1925

Printed in the United States of America

TO

FRIENDS EVERYWHERE

SCRIMSHAW

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SCRIMSHAW

IN whaling days, from island home afar,
The sailor lads, in working, understood
The magic of their ivory—and their wood—
Carving, with cunning hand, the treasures rare
To bring back to the brave ones waiting there.
Each gift a message bore, and o'er it brood
Memories—magic fingers, and the mood
Of him, who made it with such loving care.

So I my bits of scrimshaw pass along,
Each one a little treasure of the heart
To which it came uncalled in simplest song,
For I would choose that you should share a part
Of this dear island's charm . . . but with a fear . . .
If I have failed—forgive me, Island dear.

NANTUCKET

O LITTLE town grey-shingled,
Hugging the golden sands
Where sapphire waters mingle
With priceless emerald strands.

The blue of Heaven guards your day,
White stars at even hour,
And through the darkness faithful rings
The curfew from the tower.

The drooping elm-trees arbor
An old and cobbled street,
Where vistas of the harbor
And hills of Shimmo meet.

A mystic spell of whaling days—
Brave captains, scrimshaw rare,
And Widows' Walks, and old doorways—
Holds me a captive there.

THE TOWN CRIER

BLOWING horn, and ringing bell,
All the news he comes to tell—
To faces at the window panes
In the grassy crooked lanes—
Just the hour, when boats are rounding
The stone jetty—whistles sounding—
Who is coming—who is going—
Where they're staying—what they're doing—
What is lost, and what is found.
This he tells on every round!

Silent is the horn forever—
Gone the ringing of the bell—
And the Crier cometh never
All his bits of "gam" to tell.
But to us, who knew his greeting
Comes an echo, faint and fleeting. . . .

THE OLD RUT ROAD

SAUNTERING through sleepy hollows,
Silently it goes until
A tiny bird on mullein perched
Pours forth ecstatic thrill.

Then it trails through hillside heather
Where the Mayflower leaves have spread
A sombre brown and rusty carpet
For the feet of lilies red.

On it jogs where horned azalea
And clethra candles scent the air,
Where grape clings to misty elder,
Sundew shy to orchid rare;

Finds the pond of floating lilies
Shut within blue iris hedge,
Skirts the shore where burns the samphire
'Mid marsh rosemary and sedge;

Lingers by the old gnarled scrub oak,
Stops within the pine tree shade,
Sees beneath boughs dark and sighing
Where a magic couch is laid

Of heaped tawny velvet needles.
  Here (while Indian ghost-flowers peep),
Wreathed by wintergreen's frail fingers,
  The old road falls asleep.

THE MAYFLOWER

ON 'Sconset moor the Mayflowers throw
Through leafy mats their breath of Spring;
Each pink and pearly blossom there
A message bears of perfume rare.
On each small blushing face a hope
And prophecy of summer fair
Is floating far on wild-flower air,
When Mayflowers blow.

THE CARDINAL

LOVELY bird—a flash of fire—your felicity
Flushes all the landscape drear,
While your wooing note, and clear,
Wakes to joy the dreaming heart.
Would that I possessed your art!

THE OLD MILL

ABOVE the town on a grassy hill,
I hear the singing of a bird
Perched on the sail of the old grey mill,
No other sound is heard.

How many secrets you could share,
Of this and that in days long gone,
When sister-mills stood gossiping there—
Old wind mill left alone.

THE ARMIES OF THE GRASS

STURDY little warriors, marching true and bold,
Wielding gallant lances glittering in the sun,
Set with priceless jewels in sunbeam gold.

Swift to meet what foemen do you climb and grip
Up the sandy bluff with wreaths of green bay strewn,
Where the sea-blue swallows restless swirl and dip?

. . . . . .

Came a winged whisper from a shadowy cloud;
Gone each mighty warrior, changed each jeweled blade;
Only slender beach grass in the soft wind bowed.

IN AVIGNON

IN Avignon you waited me,
O little Virgin mine!
It was Springtime when I came that day;
Perfumed with blossoms the pathway
That led me to your shrine,
O little Virgin mine!

Here Petrarch and his Laura strayed,
O little Virgin mine!
Crystal the spring in loved Vaucleuse
'Mid lavender of heavenly hues,
Their love was blessed with thine,
O little Virgin mine!

The babe I found there in your arms,
O little Virgin mine!
The Rhone doth ever Laura call,
While lost in blue were poplars tall,
Touched with a light divine,
O little Virgin mine!

Avignon, 1920.

THE SEA GULLS

THERE'S a little fleet of white sails
This morning on the sea,
They are going in a stiff head wind;
What can their errand be?

And as I look, how strange the sight—
They are far up in the sky.
Why, they are just a flock of gulls
Who've used their sails to fly!

AT SANKATY LIGHT

POOR little bird with a soft golden frill,
Ended thy life-throb, 'mid roaring of sea,
On the blown beach-grass, fallen and still.

Lured to thy death by the flame of the Light,
Thy eager wings that were trembling for warmth,
Broken and bruised, have finished their flight.

Gently I rest thee on pillow of bay,
Sea-song for requiem—while through the mist
Is heard the sad cry of thy mate far away.

BY THE WATERS OF THE SESACHACHA

WILD geese had returned to their loved pond again
The Fall sun in sinking had sent a red ray
On the pool in the distance where hallowed vervain
And mallows of Summer with reeds and flags play.

On a cliff far away were the mossy green mounds,
Where lie squaws and chiefs of the dim long ago;
By the sand of the sea, and built close to the ground
Was a little grey village deserted and low.

But the memory left me that never can fade,
Of that sunset hour, and all that I heard,
Is a little green boat, where the beach grass swayed . . .
And the farewell note of a wandering bird.

THE GRACKLE

A RUSTY gate a-swinging,
The sound floats on the breeze.
It is the grackle singing
In old wind-blown pine trees,
Guarding the silent hill crest
Where snow-drops first are found;
And here the bronze bird builds his nest,
Within this sacred ground.

Like rusty gate a-swinging—
Strange in this song is peace,
Thoughts that are upward winging
Bidding earth's doubting cease.

God's Acre.

PEAR POND

O COME, but tread lightly through heather and bay
To a magical pool on the lone silent moor,
The fruit of what mystical tree none can say,
And pickerel weed sapphires it o'er.

Till it glows like a fruit from a blue jewel carved
By Sinbad the Sailor, from far Cathay brought.
Did he land on these shores, do the dunes old and grey
Hold mightier treasure by wizard touch wrought?

'Tis a rare jewel set in the hollow of hills,
Where clethra her candles of fresh incense burns—
And the meadow lark cries, and the song sparrow trills,
While blushing sabbatia looks out from the ferns.

SUNSET ON THE ANAPO

COME drift upon the Anapo,
Soft murmurings are there
From Donax reeds, while gay below
The yellow iris in a glow
Wafts Spring-time on the air.

In waters blue, grey mullet hide;
The Dryads lurk in green
Papyrus tassels, softly tied,
O'er Cyane's fount dim shadows glide,
And Naiads coy are seen.

Sways in the breeze at sunset hour,
Each slender bamboo rod;
A small bird trills in leafy bower—
The sun descends, a scarlet flower—
Dropped by a careless god.

Sicily, 1920.

THE BLUE NUN'S VESPER

THE vesper candles were blowing
A glow on the Virgin's face;
White roses and incense throwing
A veil o'er the holy place;
And the choir softly chanting
Ave Maria of Grace.

Amid the hallowed shadows
Each heart breathed forth its prayer,
When a voice arose appealing
As the cry of a bird in despair
Spearing the mist with a longing
Trembling for clearer air.

Since then, when candles are burning
And the vesper hour appears,
Comes that note of a Blue Nun's yearning,
A gentle soul with her fears;
And I see a heart in its veiling,
And I have a veil of tears.

Rome, 1922.

THE RED, THE WHITE AND THE BLUE

I KNOW a pool where red birds flash—
Rubies in burnished sedge;
Where Indian-pink, and paint-brush splash
Scarlet, along its edge.

And a white, fluttering butterfly
Seeks fruity vintage rare,
Draining each snowy nectary
Of sweet its heart doth bear.

Blue dragon-flies poise, dart and glide,
And Iris banners gleam,
Bearing celestial signals wide,
While blue-eyed grasses dream.

Thus from the sod, red, blue and white
Flash out in sunlit bars,
And on the pool's deep heart at night
God sets the stars.

ASPHODEL

FIELDS of asphodel are swaying
Beneath the star-lit skies;
Reeds low cradle-song are playing
To closed blue Iris eyes;

While Allah's little shepherd lad
Sleeps under thatched roof near.
At dawn's first ray the dream-eyed lad
Leaps forth and, without fear

Takes staff, and cup, and trills his flute
As his white flock he leads
Where the pink asphodels look up,
Near Iris in the reeds.

Algeria, 1920.

A FALL GARDEN

NASTURTIUMS bright in tangles trail,
Grave pansy faces call;
High hollyhocks rise stately by
An old grey-shingled wall.
Gladiolas and zinnias prim
Lead onward to a box-bush trim.

Here gorgeous dahlias flop, and spread,
Chrysanthemums unfold;
Fall mignonette with sweetness fills
The path of marigold . . .
But most of all, an old gnarled tree
Of yellow quinces speaks to me.

PADEREWSKI

(*Playing Chopin's Etude The Butterfly*)

ALL the sorrows of Poland
In his sad face revealed!
Ah, list! those magic fingers
Brooding over ivory give
The sip of nectar held concealed
In an orchid's heart;
And fluttering butterflies live!

THE MAGIC CARPET

IT spreads across the moorlands
Where field-lark nests are found
Under the swaying grasses,
Hugging the friendly ground.

Such softness and such color
Was never wrought for throne.
The fragrance and the incense
Araby does not own.

Come share this magic carpet—
'Tis yours as well as mine.
Come where the bee and butterfly
Quaff cups of juice divine.

A flash of royal violets,
Purple of Tyrian dyes,
With threads of waxen mayflowers
Up from the moorland rise.

Pink lady-slippers follow—
Pale eye-bright, and primrose,
And flaming lily of the field
In gorgeous fire glows.

Gerardia, asters, goldenrod
And ladies' tresses white,
Through sun-kist warp of leafy web
Weave in a pattern bright.

The Magic Carpet

O'erhead in seas of azure
The fleets of clouds sail by,
Or else the stars are flashing
Their lanterns in the sky.

Woven the rug to music,
Bird-song from dawn to night,
And then the cricket chirping
By glow-worm candle light,

Till Jack Frost stops the weaving
And nips each glowing thread,
And o'er the faded carpet
A snowy sheet is spread.

Then we must wait for bird-song,
For flash of blue on wing,
To see the loom start spinning
Beneath the touch of Spring.

THE BLUE HERON

THERE'S a pond nestling low in the sand dunes,
Golden framed under turquoise sky,
And around it in tangled meshes
The trailing wild cranberries lie.

Above it rises a headland
Of beach grass in silvery tone,
And today in the heart of its silence
A blue heron stands alone.

The sedges are waving about him;
There are earth-stars and sundew shy;
While over the dunes the shadows
And silence are lost in the sky.

THE HARBOR ON A DAY IN OCTOBER

BLUE is the harbor, and sail-boats are merry—
Butterflies white that are sipping in glee;
Golden the sands of the shore, where wild cherry
Grows with the cactus and juniper tree.

Cloudless the sky, and no sound is arising,
Only the splashing from scalloper lone;
Seagulls are dipping, and small fish surprising—
Fish that too near to the surface have gone.

Grey wharves deserted, where captains set sailing
On voyages lasting through long, weary years,
Where women waved God-speed to ships off for whaling—
Memories of heart-aches, of hopes and of fears.

Little red hills give their color of gladness,
Leaping afar in the distance away.
Their message is one with no note of sadness:
"After the winter winds—flowers of May!"

THE CRICKET

CHEERY little cricket singing
By the hearth-stone there
With a note of April ringing
Though October winds are winging
On the frosty air.

Why of April is thy greeting
All the trees are bare,
All the birds are swift retreating—
For a fairer southland meeting;
Why hast thou no care?

But the cricket un-regretting
Proudly does his share
To keep Spring in Winter's setting—
Keep content instead of fretting
By the hearth-stone there.

THE OLD TOWN PUMP

DEAR faithful friend in garb of green
Here, children toddling came—
Here, lads and lassies gay were seen,—
Here, gammed the village dame.

The cobbles now are mossy grown,
Around thee,—and beside
And close up to thy body worn
Thy helpless arm is tied.

We miss the sea-worn captains here
Spinning old yarns again,
And brimming cups now empty are . . .
But memories remain.

DAWN AT SCONSET

GREY, mystic sea; a lone star in the east;
And silence, deepened by the ebbing tide.
Now o'er the moorland, where the dunes divide,
A sudden ray of beauty is released—
By every tint of rainbow is increased,
Until in golden glory springs the sun—
Waking pale yellow butterflies upon
The sleeping gorse, on which they dream and feast.

In ecstacy I gaze . . . so far away,
So dim and far, things that are nearest seen . . .
So near, the Unseen . . . that was far before.
From the real world I pass . . . through a
wide door . . .
A lark's shrill upward cry dispels the dream;
The moorland quickens with the light of day.

W9-DBR-544